

**The President's Weekly Address**

*March 26, 2016*

This week, our hearts are with the people of Belgium, as terrorist attacks claimed the lives of more than thirty people. Yesterday we learned that at least two Americans were killed. We pray for their families and loved ones. At least 14 Americans were injured. And we pray for their full recovery, along with everyone else affected by these attacks.

Earlier this week, I called the Prime Minister of Belgium and offered him our full array of support in bringing to justice any terrorists involved in planning or aiding this unconscionable attack on innocent men, women, and children. Belgium is a close friend and ally of the United States. And when it comes to our friends, America has their back, especially as we fight the scourge of terrorism.

More broadly, we're going to continue to root out and defeat ISIL. We've been taking out ISIL leadership, and this week, we removed one of their top leaders from the battlefield permanently. A relentless air campaign—and support for forces in Iraq and Syria who are fighting ISIL on the ground—has allowed us to take approximately 40 percent of the populated territory that ISIL once held in Iraq. We're supporting Iraqi security forces who are beginning to put pressure on the ISIL stronghold of Mosul. And we will not stop until ISIL's safe havens are destroyed.

We're also working to disrupt plots against the United States and against our friends and allies. A team of FBI agents is on the ground in Belgium supporting the investigation. We've ramped up our intelligence cooperation so that we can root out ISIL's operations. And we constantly review our homeland security posture to remain vigilant against any efforts to target the United States.

ISIL poses a threat to the entire civilized world. That's why we've been leading a truly global coalition that will be vital to our success. Secretary Kerry is leading an international effort to bring the Syrian war to an end, a critical piece of restoring stability to that war-torn part of the world. And next week, dozens of world leaders will come here to Washington for a summit focused on nuclear security. We'll use that opportunity to also review our joint efforts against ISIL and to make sure the world remains united in this effort to protect our people.

As we move forward in this fight, we have to wield another weapon alongside our airstrikes, our military, our counterterrorism work, and our diplomacy. And that's the power of our example: our openness to refugees fleeing ISIL's violence; our determination to win the battle against ISIL's hateful and violent propaganda, a distorted view of Islam that aims to radicalize young Muslims to their cause. In that effort, our most important partners are American Muslims. That's why we have to reject any attempt to stigmatize Muslim Americans and their enormous contributions to our country and our way of life. Such attempts are contrary to our character, to our values, and to our history as a nation built around the idea of religious freedom. It's also counterproductive. It plays right into the hands of terrorists who want to turn us against one another; who need a reason to recruit more people to their hateful cause.

I 'm a father. And just like any other parent, the awful images from Brussels draw my thoughts to my own children's safety. That's also why you should be confident that defeating ISIL remains our top military, intelligence, and national security priority.

We will succeed. The terrorists will fail. They want us to abandon our values and our way of life. We will not. They want us to give in to their vision of the future. We will defeat them with ours. Because we know that the future belongs not to those who seek only to destroy, but to those who have the courage to build.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:45 p.m. on March 25 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on March 26. In the address, the President referred to Justin and Stephanie Shults, U.S. citizens who were killed in the terrorist bombing at the Brussels Airport in Brussels, Belgium, on March 22; Prime Minister Charles Yvon Michel of Belgium; and Abd al-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli, an Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization leader known as "Haji Imam" who was killed in a U.S. airstrike. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 25, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 26. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Kerry, John F.; Michel, Charles Yvon; Obama, Malia; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Qaduli, Abd al-Rahman Mustafa al- "Haji Imam"; Shults, Justin; Shults, Stephanie.

*Subjects:* Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nuclear Security Summit; Belgium : Prime Minister; Belgium : Relations with U.S.; Belgium : Terrorist attacks in Brussels; Iraq : Security cooperation with U.S.; State, Department of : Secretary; Syria : U.S. and coalition airstrikes; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

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